GOVERNMENT OF INDIA
EXTERNAL AFFAIRS
LOK SABHA

UNSTARRED QUESTION NO:5665
ANSWERED ON:16.05.2007
REGIONAL PASSPORT OFFICES
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Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether the Regional Passport Offices (RPOs) functioning in the country particularly in Tamilnadu are over burdened with ever increasing applications;

(b) if so, the details thereof;

(c) whether the applicants have to wait for months together to receive the passports;

(d) if so, the details thereof alongwith the waiting period, RPOs-wise;

(e) the number of complaints received during the last three years in this regard;

(f) the number of persons found guilty and the action taken by the Government against them; and

(g) the steps taken to mitigate the work-load of the offices and the hardships being experienced by the Applicants in RPOs?

Answer

MINISTER OF THE STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI E. AHAMED)

(a)&(b) Yes. There has been a surge in the number of passport applications received in the whole country, including in Regional Passport Offices functioning in Tamil Nadu. The details of passport applications received and passports issued by the two Passport Offices currently functioning in Tamil Nadu (Chennai and Tiruchirappali) during the last three years are given below:

Passport Office	Number of Applications received			Passport issued		
	2004	2005	2006	2004	2005	2006
Chennai	230529	237561	291916	216367	212143	300503
Tiruchirappali	222368	225403	279713	261803	220429	303684

(c) & (d) Passports are issued to applicants as expeditiously as possible either under the Tatkal category on post-police verification basis or in the normal category on receipt of police verification reports. The average time taken for issuing a passport is now 65 days in Chennai and 43 days in Tiruchirappali subject to completion of requisite formalities. This time varies in keeping with rush of applications on various occasions and time taken for police verification. However, continuous efforts are made to curtail the time for rendering passport services.

(e) The number of complaints received in RPOs during the last three years are as given below:

Passport Office	Number of complaints received		
	2004	2005	2006
Chennai	33	49	194
Tiruchirappali	39	43	92

(f) The number of persons found guilty in the above offices, against whom action was taken by the Government is given below:

	2005	2006	2007
Suspension	2	1	1
Departmental	1	1	
Charge sheet			
Penalty Imposed	1	1	1

(g) The Ministry has been continually taking a number of measures to make the passport issuance system simpler and speedier for the comfort and convenience of the passport seeking public. Some of these important steps are delineated as under:

(i) Revised passport issuance guidelines were introduced during the Passport Officers' Conference in Chennai on 22 December 2006. These guidelines are given in the Annexure. These guidelines, together with the strengthening of the grievance redressal mechanism, have mitigated the hardship of passport applicants to a great extent.

(ii) Pendency is monitored across all Passport Offices on a fortnightly basis and steps are taken to curtail the same as required.

(iii) The State Governments have been requested to dispatch the police verification reports in three weeks.

(iv) The submission of applications has been decentralised for the convenience of the applicants and to expedite police verification. Under this scheme, passport applications are also received at District level in the District Passport Cells (DPCs) located in the office of District Magistrate or Superintendent of Police (as decided by the respective State Government). In addition, they are also received at designated Speed Post Centres and Passport Application Collection Centres in various states. Currently there are 31 DPCs and 140 Speed Post Centres accepting passport applications in Tamil Nadu.

(v) Government have sanctioned 293 additional posts in various categories for Passport Offices, including in Tamil Nadu. The process for filling up these posts has been set in motion.